

THE DUTY OF  
DAILY  
FREQUENTING  
THE PUBLIC  
SERVICE  
OF THE CHURCH

The Rev. John Adamson

*The Duty of Daily  
frequenting the Publick  
Service of the Church*

Recommended in a  
**SERMON**

Preached in a CHAPEL

At *Wragby* in *Lincoln-shire*, Erected  
to that Purpose by

Sir EDMUND TURNOR, Kt.

And Confecrated by the Lord Bishop of Lincoln  
the 18th. Day of July, 1697.

By *John Adamson*, M. A. Rector of  
*Burton-Coggles* in *Lincoln-shire*.

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T O  
Sir *Edmund Turnor*, Kt.

*SIR,*

**A** *S* by manifold great Favours You have a Right to all the Services I am capable of paying You, You have yet a more peculiar one to the Dedication of this Sermon, in that it was first Preached, and is now Published by Your Commands. This, I hope, will in part excuse me to the World for troubling it with so plain a Discourse; and the Pious cogent Reason, with which You was pleased to enforce Your Commands, I cannot doubt will do the rest, (viz.) That You might thereby have Copies of it for those several Parishes, where Your exemplary Piety hath effectually provided for the daily Performance of publick Prayer.

Whilst, Sir, Your pious Zeal thus worthily Encourages and Promotes the Service of God, (of which I could give many and great Instances, but that I well know Your singular Humility will not permit me,) I could not; I think, I ought not, decline any thing in my Power, which in Your Opinion may contribute something (tho' but a little) to so excellent an End.

If this plain Discourse, adapted to a plain but honest People, may (by the blessing of God) work upon any such, a greater Reverence for the Houses of Prayer, and a greater Diligence and Seriousness in frequenting them, I shall not regard what Opinion the Nice and Censorious may have of it, or of me for Publishing it. My first aim therein being, to promote the Honor of our Lord, the Interest of our

*Religion, and the Good of Souls; and a secondary, Sir, to testify to the World my ready Obedience and great Obligations to Your self. In a deep Sense of which, and the much Good You daily do, I must ever pray (as I am sure great Numbers are obliged) that it may please God long to continue so great a Blessing, as You are, to our Religion, to our Church, to the worthy Clergy of it, to Your Family, to the Poor, to Your Friends, even to all who are any ways deserving and capable of Receiving Advantage from such a Fountain of Exemplary Piety, true Goodness, and diffusive Charity: And that in the other World You may largely receive a Glorious Recompence for all the Good You have so liberally done in this; particularly to,*

Honoured S I R,

Your most Obliged, and most

Faithful humble Servant,

*John Adamson.*

St. *Matthew* XXI. part of the 13<sup>th</sup>. Verſe.  
*My Houſe ſhall be called the Houſe of Prayer.*

**T**HESE Words repreſent unto us our Bleſſed Saviour reſtoring the Temple of God. to the Holy Uſes, to which it had been dedicated, and expreſs his Zeal for the Honour due to ſuch Places, and his juſt Indignation againſt all Prophanations and Abuſes of them.

The Temple at *Jeruſalem*, was ſolemnly dedicated to the Service and Worſhip of God; a practice which has obtain'd in all the Ages of Chriſtianity, at leaſtwiſe ever ſince the Reign of *Conſtantine*, as *Eusebius* acquaints us, in reference\* to our Churches and Places of Religious Worſhip. But the corrupt Priests amongſt the Jews had groſſly perverted it to other purpoſes, ſubſervient to their carnal and ſecular deſigns. The occaſion which they took for ſo doing, was this: Againſt the Feaſt of the Paſſover, the Jews from all Countries reſorted to *Jeruſalem*, to keep that Solemn Feaſt there. To ſupply them with Sacrifices (which many of them who came from *Far*, could not poſſibly bring with them;) a great number of Cattle were ſlain for that purpoſe by the Priests, which which they ſold to the Rich (no doubt, at a great Advantage;) and for the Poorer ſort of People, they provided (as the Law directed) Turtle Doves and Young Pidgeons. And becauſe many Strangers could not be provided with thoſe half

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\*. *Hist. Eccles.* I. 10. c. 3.

Shekels (in value about 15 *d.* of *English* Coin) which by the Law were required to be Yearly offer'd<sup>\*</sup>; nor with smaller pieces of Mony to make their payments for those Sacrifices which they wanted; they therefore set up Money-Changers to supply them in both Cases by way of Exchange, either for other Money, or (with the Poorer sort of People) for other things in lieu of Money<sup>†</sup>; but in doing this, they used great Exaction, and are therefore sharply rebuked by our Saviour (in the words following the Text) under that hainous Character of a *Den of Thieves*; and so they plainly appear guilty of a double crime, prophaning the Temple by their Merchandize, and grinding the Poor by their Oppression.

Of these their wicked Practices, they had long before been admonished by the Prophets<sup>‡</sup>; and by our Blessed Saviour himself, soon after his entrance upon his Prophetick Office, and that in a very mild and gentle manner:<sup>§</sup> *Take these things hence, make not my Father's House an House of Merchandize.* But still they persisted in their Wickedness, as even Christians too often do, against all admonitions and persuasions to the contrary; and therefore in this place of the Text, our Blessed Saviour, a little before his Death, finding them incorrigible under more gentle Methods; he, as he was the

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\*. Exod. 30. 15, 16.

†. *Godwyn's* Jewish Antiq. I. 6. c. 10. And *Pool's* Synopsis *in lec.*

‡. So some interpret *Jer.* 11. 5 and *Isa.* 26. 10.

§. Joh. 2. 16.

Son of that God, whose Temple was thus prophaned, and in a just Zeal for the Honour of his Father, \* *Cast the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, overthrew the Tables of the Money-Changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves*: Reminding them of what before they had often heard, but now either had forgotten, or else wilfully neglected, in the words of the Text, *My House shall be called* (*i.e.* shall be, according to the frequent signification of that Phrase in holy Scripture, †) *a House of Prayer*.

But how could this be, may some say, A single Person, despised, rejected, and probably designed by them in a few days to be crucified, be able to drive out so great a number of obstinate Men, backed by the Powers then in being, wedded to their Interest, and much exasperated to see it so obstructed and defeated by the so much by them vilified Jesus? Whence was it that none of them had Courage enough to resist him, or so much as open a Mouth (as far as appears to us) in their justification, but tamely submitted to his Rebuke, and suffer'd themselves to be driven out?

This must be resolv'd into the Divine Power of our Lord, and was one of the miraculous Effects of it. Such a Majesty at that time appeared in his Countenance, and such an Awe and Dread it wrought upon his most spiteful Adversaries, as

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\*. Matt. 21. 12.

†. So it is to be understood in *Isa.* 9. 6. *Matt.* 5. 19. *Luke* 1. 32, 35, 35, *Rev.* 19. 13. See Dr. *Hammond* on *Matt.* 2. 23. note I.



brought them to an absolute Compliance with his Will, and perfect Submission to his Commands.

Which shews how utterly unable the most daring sinners are to withstand our Lord, when he comes in good earnest (as sometime he certainly will) to execute Vengeance upon them. None of them durst oppose one word, when our Blessed Lord with an Authority becoming his Station, and his Zeal for his Father's Honour, urg'd upon them the words of the Text, *My House shall be called* (or shall be) *the House of Prayer*.

Having as briefly as I well could, shewn you the Occasion and Design of these words, every one will easily discern that they instruct us in this great Truth, that Places dedicated to God and his Worship are to be treated with Reverence, and not to be employ'd in any prophane or common Uses, but only in Religious Duties; particularly that of Prayer, which is the principal of them. So has God declared by his Prophet *Isaiah* (c. 56. v. 7.) and so our Blessed Saviour from him in the Text, *My House shall be called the House of Prayer*.

*Prayer* is the Duty, which God in the Old Testament, and our Blessed Saviour in the New were pleased to make Choice of to represent the others by which are to be performed in Places set apart for Religious Worship. And, *Prayer* is the especial Duty for the performance of which the Place this day Consecrated was Erected by your pious Benefactor; and therefore of this Duty only I shall Discourse unto you at this time.

And here I might usefully enlarge on the more general parts of Prayer; as,

1. *Supplication*, When we ask of God any Blessing we want either for our Souls or Bodies.

2. *Intercession*, When we Pray for others, even all Mankind; but more especially for our Governours and the Household of Faith.

3. *Thanksgiving*, When we recount with grateful Hearts the many Blessings both Spiritual and Temporal which we enjoy; give God the Glory of them, and our selves to him in gratitude for them.

All these general Parts of Prayer we are directed to by the Apostle<sup>\*</sup>, and are all of them sufficiently provided for in our excellent Liturgy, which highly recommends it to our great Esteem and constant Use.

I might also seasonably enlarge on the most needful, and yet too commonly neglected, Qualifications of Prayer; as,

1. *Purity and Holiness*, Since we know that *God heareth not Sinners*<sup>†</sup> (*i.e.* wilful and impenitent Ones); that the Apostle requires that when we Pray we *lift up Holy Hands*<sup>‡</sup>; and that *the Sacrifice of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord; but the Prayer of the Upright is his delight*.<sup>§</sup>

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\*. 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2.

†. St. Joh. 9. 31.

‡. 1 Tim. 2. 8.

§. Prov. 15. 8.

2. *Serious Attention* to our Prayers; for, *then* only we can be said to Pray, and *then* only expect to be heard: Inasmuch as our Blessed Saviour has set the Mark of Hypocrisie upon such Prayers as are not accompanied with the Heart, and plainly tells us they are all in vain, Matth. 15. 7, 8, 9. *Ye Hypocrites, ye draw nigh unto me with your mouth, and honour me with your lips, but your heart is far from me; but in vain do you worship me.*

3. *Fervour and Earnestness*; with all the Affection and Devotion of our Souls, such as may testify we really desire the things we Pray for. This is required of us by the Apostle, that we *be fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*<sup>\*</sup>; This is that which makes our Prayers very prevalent with God, *James 5.16. The fervent Prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Even amongst the Jews, the Talmudists taxing the Peoples negligence in Prayer, one of the three faulty sorts of their Amen recounted by them is, a faint Amen<sup>†</sup>, when they pray'd without Fervency.

4. *Humility*, both in our Souls and Bodies. In our Souls, acknowledging our unworthiness to appear before so great a Majesty, to receive from him any of those Blessings we ask, but only upon the account of his Bounty and Mercy, and the Merits of his Son. And Humility in our Bodies, expressing this Humility of our Souls; putting up our Petitions to the

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\*. Rom. 12. 11.

†. *Godwin's Jewish Antiquit.* I. 2. c. 2,

Majesty of Heaven for the greatest Blessings we can receive upon our Knees, according to the Example of Holy Men in Scripture,\* of the blessed Apostles,† and even of Christ himself, who kneeled down when he pray'd to his heavenly Father, St. *Luke* 22. 41. Accordingly we read of the Primitive Christians, That to *Sit at Prayers was ever held by them a posture of great Rudeness and Irreverence.*‡ And *Tertullian* falls heavy

*Tertull. de Orat. c. 12. p. 134. Contra Scripturam fecerit, si quis in Cathedrâ aut subsellio sederit; factum isthud irreligiosum est, nisi exprobramus Deo quod nos Oratio fatigaverit, &c.*

upon some that used it in his time (about two hundred years after Christ) telling them, *They acted contrary to Scripture and were*

*Irreligious in so doing; and represents them as if they had a mind to reproach God to his face, and tell him that they are weary of the Duty of Praying to him.* “If it be an irrevent thing (as he goes on in arguing with them) to sit down before one for whom thou hast a great Reverence and Veneration; how much more does it favour of Irreligion to do so in the Presence of the Living God, even while the Angel is yet standing by thee to carry up the Prayer to Heaven.”

These, together with a *true Faith* and a *Dependance* upon

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\*. *David*, *Psal.* 95. 6. *Solomon*, 2 *Chron.* 6. 13. *Daniel*, c. 6. v. 10.

†. *St. Stephen*, *Acts* 7. 60. *St. Peter*, *Acts* 9. 40. *St. Paul*, *Acts* 20. 36. & 21. 5.

‡. *Dr. Cave's Prim. Christ.* part. 1. c. 9.

the alone *Merits of Christ* (which I presume I need not mention in this place ) are the chief of those Qualifications (and yet too commonly neglected) with which we must take care we put up our Prayers to God, if we hope to have them accepted by him; and these I might usefully have enlarg'd upon. But it must suffice thus briefly to have hinted them, that I may the more largely recommend unto you.

5. In the Fifth place, *Frequency* in this Duty of Prayer, and that in Publick, as often as you have Opportunities; as you of this place will now daily have.

This I would earnestly recommend to your serious Practice upon these three Accounts. In that

I. It is much for the Honour of God and our Religion.

II. Very Advantageous to our selves in reference to this World.

III. It greatly promotes a good Life (in reference to the Happiness of the next) in all those that sincerely make use of it.

1. We ought to be frequent in this Duty of Publick Prayer, because it is much for the Honour of God and our Religion. As often as we Pray unto him with Seriousness, we acknowledge and adore the Sovereignty, Wisdom, Justice, and Power, and Mercy of God; and in doing all this, we must needs be granted to Honour him, and perform a Service highly acceptable to him.

When we Pray unto him, we evidently declare that we own his Dominion over us, and that he has a Right to govern

us, and that all our Services are his due, tho' we too often unworthily alienate them to prophane and wicked Purposes.

We also acknowledge his Wisdom to be infinite, that as he thoroughly understands all the Actions of our Lives and secrets of our Hearts, all our Wants and Necessities, so he best knows how to make the most suitable Provision for them.

We likewise hereby magnifie the Justice of God, particularly in our Confessions and Deprecations; knowing him ready to pass an impartial Sentence upon us for our Sins.

Again, in all our Prayers to God, we must be supposed to acknowledge his Power to be infinitely great to punish our Sins; to reward our Well-doing; and to supply all our Wants.

Lastly, We hereby acknowledge the Mercy of God to be infinite; without a great Sense of which, it would be both Folly and Arrogancy, for us to approach unto him, particularly to lay open before him all the miscarriages of our Life, which generally ('tis to be fear'd) are so many and so heinous, that we could never hope for any Pardon to them, but that we believe God to be very ready to embrace every true repenting Sinner. This should engage us to Frequency in our Prayers, which you see do so much magnifie the glorious Attributes of God, which he loves to see acknowledged by the Sons of Men. And surely the more Publick this Acknowledgment is, the more Honour it gives to God, and is consequently the more acceptable to him.

So very acceptable to him is this Duty of publick Prayer;

that when *David* had but a thought to build an House for this purpose, God told him that *he did well*, even when he had done nothing, neither might do any thing, only had the Design of doing it in his heart and purpose.\*

The like gracious Acceptance of such Acts of Piety our Blessed Saviour himself assures us of, under the Gospel, in that he was effectually prevailed with to heal the Servant of the Centurion, being recommended to him under this Character, *That he had built them a Synagogue*<sup>†</sup>; a place for the better Conveniency of their Religious Worship.

*May this Chapel this day Consecrated to the like use, and for the same reason, find the like gracious Acceptance with our Lord!*

'Tis also much for the Honour of our Religion, and tends to gain Profelytes to it, (which also is another way of giving Honour to God.) This is so universally acknowledged, That even all Religions (however false or Superstitious) will have their Daily Publick Offices; thus it is amongst the Jews, Mahometans, and Papists. And is not this a great reproach to Us, Whose Worship is much more Pure, to fall so very short of them in the Exercise of it? Where is our Zeal for the Honour of our excellent Religion, to suffer them so much to out-doe Us in the Frequency of Religious Offices; which gains a mighty Reputation to them, but casts a reproach upon us?

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\*. 2 Chron. 6. 8.

†. St. *Luke* 7. 5.

2. *Frequency* in Publick Prayers is very advantageous to our selves in reference to this World, being the likeliest way to obtain any Blessings we desire or stand in need of, either for our selves or others.

St. *James* tells us\*, That the single *Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much*; and gives us a Proof of it in† *Elias*, by this means shutting and opening Heaven, first against and then for Rain. And if Prayer be thus powerful when single, what is it when Social, when in Publick, in a whole Congregation, in a whole Nation? When there is a pious Conspiracy of fervent Prayers from Consenting Hearts, and concurring Lips, all at once making (as it were) an Assault upon the Almighty, with the Holy violence of a strong importunity to extort a Blessing from him. God delights to be thus wrestled with; and is not able, because not willing, to deny any thing, convenient for his People, that is thus requested of him.

Thus speaks *Tertullian*‡: *Coimus ad Deum, quaso mana facta preationibus ambiamus, Hæc vis Deo grata est.* “We come (*says he*) by Troops to the place of Assembly, that being banded (as it were) together into an Army, we may besiege God with our Prayers and Petitions; this kind of violence is very pleasing and grateful to him.

Our Saviour himself saith\*, *If two of you shall agree on Earth as*

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\*. *St. Jam.* 5. 16.

†. *Ver.* 17, 18.

‡. *Apol.* 35. *A.*



*touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.* Hereupon St. Ignatius argues, If the Prayer of one or two be of so great prevalence, *how much more will the Prayer of the whole Church be prevalent.*<sup>A</sup> And no wonder is it that they should be so when they have one amongst concurring with them in their Petitions, whom God always hears, even his only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And indeed his Presence with them, himself Assigns for the reason of their Prevalency with his Father; For (says he) *where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.*\*

And as Publick Prayer is thus advantageous to us in respect to our Personal Wants, so is it no less in respect to the Community, to the Church of God, to our Governours, to our Relations and Friends, even to all Mankind, for whom our excellent Liturgy has furnish'd us with suitable Prayers, even for all sorts and Conditions of Men.

*(Hic bellum Lachrymosum, hic miseram famam*

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\*. St. Matt. 18. 20.

<sup>A</sup> Adamson here quotes from the 'long recension' of Ephesians: εἰ γὰρ ἑνὸς καὶ δευτέρου προσευχὴ τοσαύτην ἰσχὺν ἔχει, [ὥστε τὸν Χριστὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐστάναι], πόσω μᾶλλον ἢ τε τοῦ ἐπισκόπου καὶ πάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας, [σύμφωνος ἀνιούσα πρὸς θεόν, πείσει παρασχεθῆναι αὐτοῖς πάντα τὰ ἐν Χριστῷ αἰτήματα]. He identifies his source as 'Epist. ad Ephes. p. 122.'

*Pestemque; a populo & Principe Cæsare*  
*Vestra motus aget prece.* Horat. l. 1. Od. 21.)

Which Prayers, when a whole Nation about the same time and in the same words of our Liturgy, duely puts up to God in the Name of his dear Son, surely they may expect to prevail much more, than when put up by single Persons in private; especially if we add God's gracious Promise to hear those Prayers more especially which are made to him in his own House, in 2 *Chron.* 7. 12, 15, 16. The Lord appeared to *Solomon*, and said unto him, *I have chosen this place to my self for an house of Sacrifice; now mine Eyes shall be open, and mine Ears attent unto the Prayer that is made in this Place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this House, that my Name may be there for ever: And mine Eyes and mine Heart shall be there perpetually.*

3. Frequency in Publick Prayer greatly promotes a good Life in all those that sincerely make use of it. And that both by it's natural Tendency, and by the blessing of God.

I. By it's natural Tendency. Can Men that consider any thing, daily Confess their Sins unto God in his own House, and in the Presence of the Holy Angels and a publick Congregation, and yet dare to continue in them, and boldly commit them again at the next Temptation? Can such easily there daily Pray, (as we do in our excellent Liturgy,) that they may hereafter live a Godly, Righteous and Sober Life; and yet allow themselves in gross Acts of Impiety against God; in deliberate Acts of Injustice or Oppression against

Man; or in the heinous Acts of Intemperance and Uncleanneſs (ſo directly oppoſite to that Sobriety they daily Pray for, and thereby acknowledge they ought to Practice,) or in any other notorious ſcandalous Sin?

Can it be imagin'd, that when they ſo frequently repeat that pious Petition with their own Lips, their Conſciences ſhould not ſometimes, nay often ſeverely rebuke them for ſuch groſs Violations of it, and give an effectual Check to ſuch Practices; which the Cuſtomary Neglecters of Publick Prayer, eaſily may, and too often do purſue, without any Senſe of their Guilt or Danger.

Further, by daily Reading or hearing read at the Publick Service of our Church, a Portion of the Psalms of *David*, ſo full of Piety and Devotion; and ſome Chapters in the Bible (too generally, I fear, neglected by Chriſtians in private) where we have excellent Rules and Examples of Holy Living, and powerful Motives to it, This muſt needs be granted to conduce very much to the directing and reforming our Lives.

If this bleſſed Effect be not wrought upon all who come daily to the Publick Prayers of our Church, more is the Pity! But the Fault is in themſelves and not in our Prayers. If ſome frequent them only in Formality and Hypocriſie, 'tis no wonder they are never the better for them. Do thou frequent them with Sincerity, Devotion, and Attention, and be affured thou ſhalt receive great ſpiritual Improvement by them; as I doubt not but thouſands of the ſincere Members

of our Church, to their inexpressible Comfort, do find.

2. This advantage of a good Life by Frequency in Publick Prayer is also (and that chiefly) to be ascribed to the Blessing of God, and the powerful working of his Grace upon us; which Blessing is promised to us, and to be obtained by us only in the serious Use of the Duty of Prayer, so qualified as I before hinted. Thus our Blessed Saviour instructs us, \* *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find: Knock and it shall be opened unto you;* Where that he refers particularly to this Blessing of his Grace and Holy Spirit, appears from these following words, † *If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* This I acknowledge is spoken of Prayer in in general; but it holds true of Publick Prayer with a great advantage, as you have already heard.

If then Frequency in Publick Prayer does thus promote the Honour of God and our Religion; if it procures those Blessings we want either for our selves or others, and greatly tends to promote a good Life; if we have any regard to the Honour of God and our Religion, if any real desire to be Happy here or hereafter, we shall rejoyce in all Opportunities of Publick Prayer and heartily endeavour so to Order our Affairs, that nothing may hinder our constant Attendance at them.

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\*. St. Luk 11. ver. 9.

†. Ver. 13.

And if Frequency in Publick Prayer be so needfull a Duty, as you have seen, the like Frequency (and that with the greatest Serioufness) in receiving the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (which is the highest Solemnity of Prayer) is, upon the Account of the same and greater Reasons, as needfull a Duty, where there are the happy Opportunities of it. And in this also the worthy Founder of your Chapel hath very piously provided for you.

And as I understand many of you purpose (very commendably) to Communicate on this day, so I hope, and earnestly exhort, you will do it with that Sincerity in a hearty Repentance for your Sins, and serious Resolutions of a Holy Life, that you may receive much spiritual Comfort and Improvement by it; and then you will even rejoyce in the frequent Opportunities of this Holy Sacrament in this place, and make it your constant Care, as it is your certain Duty, to dispose your selves for a worthy partaking of them.

Consider well, and always bear it in mind, how great your Guilt will be, how heavy your Condemnation, if ye shall slight and neglect, or any ways abuse such powerful means of Salvation.

But I must not insist upon this copious Subject. I only - crave your Patience whilst I observe unto you three or four practical Inferences from what has been discoursed.

### I N F E R E N C E S.

I. If these Places be Houses of Prayer, and, by our Saviour's

own direction, not to be employ'd in common Uses, then let us always treat them with Respect and Reverence; considering they are God's Houses, Consecrated to his more immediate Service, and in which he is pleas'd to vouchsafe his more peculiar Presence.

In respect of this his Presence, God declares that the Place where he appear'd to Moses was Consecrated, and therefore required him to shew Reverence to it \*, *Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is Holy Ground.* The like was commanded to *Joshua* upon the same account †, and thus as a Token of Respect, Obedience, and Humility. The Custom being taken (as some ‡ Conjecture) from Captives or Bond-Slaves, who used to go barefoot in token of their Subjection.

Hence arose that Custom amongst the Jews for the Priests to enter into the Temple barefoot. § The like was observed amongst the very Heathen, who had their *Nudipedalia Sacra*, and put off their Shoes when they enter'd the Temple of *Apollo*. \*\* So some have observ'd, That even amongst the *Turks* and *Æthiopick* Christians, they go not into their Sacred Assemblies but with their Feet naked. That was the ancient

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\*. Exod. 3. 5.

†. *Joshua* 5. 15.

‡. V. *Pool's Synopsis* on Exod.

§. *Aynsworth* on Exod. 30. 19.

\*\*. Mr. *Poole*, ut prius. *Id. ib.*

way amongst them of expressing their Reverence, as uncovering the Head is now amongst us. And will not all these rise up in Judgment against us, and condemn us, if we permit them to shew more Respect and Honour to the Places of their false Worship, than we to those of the True.

Thus we find St. *Paul* requiring Decency in the Church (particularly that Men be uncovered, and Women covered there)\* *Because of the Angels*; they being supposed both under the Old and New Testament, to be present in the places of God's Publick Service, observing the Behaviour of all there present, and accusing every Indecency and Disrespect to God.†

And from this their presence it is, that God is said to be peculiarly present in Churches ( whose presence in one place more than in another, in respect of himself is not easily conceivable) and so to fit them to be the Houses of God; according to the Explication of *Jacob*,‡ who upon the Vision of Angels at *Luz*, awakes and says, *How venerable this Place, the Lord is in it, this is none other but the House of God.*

Upon this Account we read that the Primitive Christians were wont to shew very great Respect and Reverence in the Church, as being the solemn Place of Worship, and where

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\*. I Cor. II. 10.

†. [Adamson doesn't give a note reference, but here cites 'Dr. Hammond *in loc. note, d.*']

‡. Gen. 18. v. 16, 17.

God did more peculiarly manifest his Presence; and are told by a learned Author,\* *That they came into the Church as into the Palace of the Great King, with Fear and Trembling*; and that the Emperors themselves, who otherwise never went without their Guard about them, yet when they came to go into the Church, used to lay down their Arms, to leave their Guard behind them, and to put off their Crowns, all as Tokens of that high Respect they bare to those Religious Places.

Let them always then be esteemed Holy by us, as being set a part for holy Uses, and in relation to God and to their End (I mean not otherwise,) and let them accordingly be always treated by us.

2. If they be Houses of Prayer, than we may hence infer the great Error of those who think Preaching to be the Chief, if not the only Duty needful to be performed in these Places: And accordingly if they be but present at the Sermon, think they have done their Duty very well, although they wholly neglect the Prayers, and think it not worth their while to come to Church when only Prayers are there performed; and this Error of their Judgment is the more dangerous, in that it engages them in so great an Error in their Practice also.

But had our Blessed Saviour been of the same Opinion with these Men, surely he would have called these Houses of God, Houses of Preaching, and not (as in the Text) *Houses of Prayer*.

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\*. *Dr. Cave's Prim. Christianity*, part I. cap. 6.



We may observe to this purpose, that in King *Solomon's* excellent Prayer at the Dedication of the Temple, \* All his Petitions are, That God would hear the Prayers which upon any occasion his People should put up to Heaven in or towards that his House: Not one Petition for a Blessing upon any other Duty, as if no other but that of Prayer (at leastwise none comparable to it) was to be performed in that place.

I speak not this to vilifie Preaching (far be that from me,) it is an excellent Ordinance, and very needful even in this knowing Age. But yet I would not have it thrust out Prayer, nor indeed be exalted above it; which all that are Judicious and Serious must grant to be an Act of Worship directed immediately to God, and a means to sanctifie Preaching, which is immediately directed to Men.

3. At all times when we approach to the House of God for Religious Worship, let us remember it is a *House of Prayer*; and then beware we no ways profane it, as the Jews did, whom our Blessed Saviour here Rebukes. And yet this I fear is too often done by too many Christians.

When we customarily neglect it, we then are Thieves (out of the Temple, though not properly in it ) by robbing God of his Glory, our Religion of its Reputation, our Christian Brethren of the Assistance of our Prayers, and our own Souls of their proper Food and Nourishment.

And when we frequent these places of Worship purely to

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\*. I Kings 8.

be thought Religious, in order to some fecular Ends, we plainly make the *House of God* an *House of Merchandife*. And they do the fame in some fort, who amidft the holy Offices of Religion employ their Thoughts upon their worldly Affairs, which ought to be wholly intent upon the weighty Duties there performed: Such make the Houfe of God an Houfe of Merchandife.

But if we be not Guilty of this fort of Profanation, there are others, too common amongft us, which ought no lefs to be avoided by us.\* The unfeemly and rude Behaviour of many in our Churches, and that even in the time of Divine Service does too loudly testify how little of Devotion brings them thither, and at how mean a rate they value the Church of that facred Place, and all thofe holy Offices that are there performed. The Impiety and Danger of which I fhall chufe to reprefent unto you in the Words of an excellent Author of our own.† *Such variety (fays he) of rude Behaviour is there too often ufed in the House of God, that fhould an Unbeliever come into our Affemblies, he must surely (as St. Paul fupposes in another Cafe, Cor. 14. 23.) fay, We are mad; to see some Gazing, some Whifpering, some Laughing, others Sleeping, and perhaps the far fewer number Praying, is fuch a Medly, as the moft brutifh Idolaters never admitted in their*

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\*. Read the Rules for our more Devout Behaviour in the time of Divine Service in the Church of *England*. Printed in 1695.

†. The Causes of the Decay of Chriftian Piety: By the Author of the *Whole Duty of Man*, c. 8.

*Worship.* And then he goes on to expostulate with Christians, as (I fear) we have too much reason to do at this Day: *When (alas!) will the Church recover its ancient Title, and become The House of Prayer? 'Tis certain that according to the present appearance it may have many more proper Names, that being the least part of Business done in it. But surely God will not always be patient of such Profanation; but will, as the Scripture speaks, Repay them to their Face, who thus contemn him to his. We know among Men, every one counts his House his Fortref; and affront offer'd him there doubles the Injury, and is not only a Contempt but an Invasion: And shall it not be a proportionable Enhauncement with God also, thus to defie him within his own Doors, and approach his Presence in an impious Bravery, the more fully to shew him how little we regard him?* (So that excellent Author.)

4. And lastly. If it be so much for the Honor of God, and our own Advantage, as you have seen, to frequent our publick Prayers, then every one may easily infer how much it is both his Duty and his Interest to be present at them, as much as possible.

You of this Place are now very happy in having daily Opportunities of publick Prayer; (and 'tis much to be wished by all serious Christians, that every Parish of this Nation could enjoy, and would make a right Use of the like Advantage.) Think then, I beseech ye, how heinous your Guilt will be, if you customarily and unnecessarily neglect these blessed Opportunities. How will ye answer it at the last and great Account to your Lord and Judge, who put it into

the Heart of your pious Benefactor to provide thus conveniently for your daily Performance of this great Duty, if ye shall flight it, despise it, and turn your backs upon it.

Whilst many of you (I fear) spend more time every Day than would be required to this Duty, in Vanities and Imperinencies: Others, it may be, in doing nothing; and others in such Business as might easily be contrived so, as not to hinder your frequenting these publick Prayers, and is of infinitely less Importance: ye will discover a great Disregard to God, the Honor of your Religion, and the Care of your own Souls, if you customarily neglect these desirable Opportunities.

The Primitive Christians set us a much better Example, and very worthy our diligent Imitation, who, we are told by a learned Author of our Church; \* *Were wont to flock to the Religious Solemnities, as to their Spiritual Meals and Banquets.* And then he recounts what St. Chrysostom<sup>†</sup> reports of the Church at *Antioch*; *That they would set aside all Affairs at home to come to Church*; and how he tells them that *it was the great Honor of the City, not so much that it had large Suburbs and vast numbers of People, or brave Houses with gilded Dining-Rooms, as that it had a diligent and attentive People, Churches so thronged and crowded, and all Persons inflamed with such an insatiable desire of the publick Offices of Religion; and that the commonness of them did not (with*

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\*. Dr. Cave in his Prim. Christianity, Part I. c. 9.

†. Hom. 56. tom. I. p. 623.

them *as I fear it too often does with us*) breed a Contempt.

Thus did true Piety prevail amongst Christians then: But (alas!) with Grief we see it infinitely decay'd with us now; when in stead of Crying out with the Psalmist, \* *When shall I come to appear in the presence of God?* we like those in *Malachi*,<sup>†</sup> *Snuff at his Service*, and say, *What a weariness is it?*

But certainly that All-seeing Eye which discerns what Multitudes carelessly absent themselves from his Worship, cannot but adjudge us most profane Despisers of his Mercy in giving and continuing to us the happy Opportunities of it.

1. *Obj.* But perhaps some may here object and say, What need these daily publick Prayers? We are careful to worship God at his House on the Lord's Day, and this seems to be all that is required of us in the Fourth Commandment; which allows us the other six Days for Labour and our own Business; and therefore thus to require us to attend the daily publick Worship, seems to be an unnecessary Service, and an infringement of that Liberty which God has graciously indulged to us. But,

*Ans.* Let such consider, That this Objection is of equal Force against all occasional Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving, which yet (I presume) themselves will allow of, and acknowledge they are obliged sometimes to observe.

Let them consider again, That the same God who gave

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\*. Psal. 42 v. 2.

†. Mal. 1. 13.

the Fourth Commandment to the *Jews*, did also enjoyn them other Days for solemn Worship, which were to be observed even upon any of those Six Days of Labour, tho' they required strict Rest, as the Day of Atonement did, *Lev.* 23.27, 28. And that they had their daily Worship notwithstanding the Fourth Commandment, at which our Blessed Saviour was frequently present, and thereby gave his Approbation of it.

And that this is no Violence to Christian Liberty, but rather a Duty recommended by Christianity appears, in that 'tis recorded, by St. *Luke* in commendation of *Anna*, That she departed not from the Temple, but served God with Prayers and Fastings Night and Day.\* And of the first Converts of Christianity, That they continued daily with one accord in the Temple.† And of the Disciples of Christ, that after his Ascension *They returned to Jerusalem, and were continually in the Temple praising and blessing God.*‡ That is, the Temple was the place (not of their continual abode, but) of their constant daily Performance of their Devotions; as the learned Paraphrast§ glosses upon those Words.

2. *Obj.* Others perhaps may say, They are very careful to perform this Duty in private; they pray at home every Morning and Night, and perhaps sometimes may read a

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\*. St. Luke 2. v. 37.

†. Acts 2. 45.

‡. St. Luke 24. v. 53.

§. Dr. *Hammond* on Acts 1. note, d.

Chapter in the Bible with their Families at the close of the Day: And this, they hope, is sufficient for them who have much Business on their Hands, and perhaps Families to provide for by their Labours, and they trust their gracious God will accept what they do, and expect no more from them. To this I Answer,

1. *Ans.* 'Tis much to be will'd, they are so well employ'd, as they pretend, at Home; but as much to be fear'd that they are not; for did they make a real Conscience of performing this Duty at their own Houses, the same Conscience would bring 'em frequently to God's (unless they labour under some unhappy Prejudices against it,) where (I'm sure) they might perform it better. For,

2. Suppose they do pray and read at Home, yet how can this excuse their neglecting the publick Service in the Church, where the same Duties are performed with greater Advantage. There thou findest many Fires to kindle thy Zeal, the Example of others for Reverence and Order, the Decency and Suitableness of the Place, the more peculiar Presence of God, and his gracious Promise, that he will have a more especial Regard to those Prayers which are put up to him in his own House, in that forequoted place, 2 *Chron.* 7. 15, 16.

Does it become us to be our own Carvers, and when our gracious God calls us to worship him in his House, to tell him in effect, he must excuse us, we'll do it as we can at our own, and that must serve his turn?

3. Consider, That altho' thou perhaps mayst duely

perform theſe Duties at Home, yet others from thy Example may think it needleſs to come to publick Prayers, and wholly omit them in private alſo; and ſo thou fall under the Guilt of Scandal, in its proper Senſe, againſt which a Woe is denounced by our Lord, *St. Matth.* 18. 7. *Woe be to that Man by whom Offences come.*

4. Conſider, That the Apoſtles and Primitive Chriſtians (who ſurely knew how to pray at Home as well as any of us, yet) were very conſtant at the publick Places of Worſhip, tho' to the great hazard of their Lives or Liberties for ſo doing; and left this expreſs Command behind them to all Chriſtians, \* *Not to forſake the Aſſembling of themſelves together.* Not to forſake the publick Religious Aſſemblies, tho' to avoid Perſecution (as was the unhappy Caſe of the Chriſtians at that time,) much leſs to avoid ſome ſmall and very intolerable Inconveniency to our ſecular Affairs (as is generally the worſt of the Caſe with us now), which that God whom we ſerve can (and certainly will) abundantly Recompence to us. ——— But then let me add,

5. In the laſt place, If any well diſpoſed Chriſtians be ſo ingaged in ſome needful Buſineſs, or have ſuch urgent Neceſſities to provide for by their Labours, that they cannot attend the daily publick Service of our Church, without great Inconveniency; and yet have really a due Eſteem for it, and would with all their Hearts be daily preſent at it, did

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\*. *Heb.* 10 v. 25.



their indispensable Occasions permit them; such, I will presume to say, shall be excused by our gracious Lord, who has declared He will have Mercy (Mercy to our selves, as well as to others) *rather than Sacrifice*, St. *Matth.* 9. 13. Such shall undoubtedly be accepted on the Account of their Wills and real Desires; and (by the Goodness of our God) in a good measure partake of the benefit of our publick Prayers, as if themselves had actually been present at them.

But for all others, who have not this Necessity to plead for their Absence; who easily might have been present at the daily Service, had they been really willing, such must not expect to be so excused; and therefore, I hope and pray, they will be prevailed with, so to acquit themselves in reference to this Duty, that God may be duly Honor'd by them ; true Piety and Devotion encouraged and advanced; their own Comfort and Prosperity promoted in this World; and their eternal Happiness (by the Mercies of God, and the Merits of his Son) secur'd to them in the next.

One word, in the close of all, To you<sup>\*</sup> in particular, for whose sakes more immediately your worthy Benefactor has erected this House of Prayer.

You, by his great Bounty, are in a more especial manner devoted to, and engaged in the Service of God; you have not the Necessities of this Life to provide for by your Labours, nor the anxious Cares of it to perplex and distract your

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\*. The Widows of the Almshouse, adjoining to the Chapel.

Thoughts; you have a comfortable Provision made you, by his Piety and Charity, both for your Souls and Bodies.

Remember always how much you are obliged both to God and him, to answer the great End of this his Bounty to you, by living to the Honour of God and your Religion; particularly by a constant and devout attendance at the Prayers and Sacraments which will be performed in this Place.

Be very careful, I beseech you, to approve your selves *Widows indeed*, that so you may be worthy of that Honor (*i.e.* Relief and Maintenance, as the Original Word\* often signifies in Scripture) which the Apostle would have to be given to such, in 1 Tim. 5. 3. *Honor (i.e. Relieve) Widows that are Widows indeed.*

And who are such, he tells us, v. 5, 7, 10. (And such I hope, and heartily pray, *All you may be,*) *She trusteth in God, and continueth in Supplications and Prayers night and day; She is blameless, and well reported of for good Works, and has diligently followed every good Work.*

This is the sum of what your Blessed Saviour, and (I presume to say) your pious Benefactor also, expects from you, (*viz.*) That you be Constant and Serious at Prayers and Sacraments; That your Conversation be Blameless, and of good Report (particularly, for Humility, Gravity, Sobriety, Contentedness, Weanedness from the World, Love and Peaceableness amongst your selves and towards all Men,

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\*. τῆς. v. Dr. *Hammond* on 1 Tim. c. 5. note, d.

Graces which more especially adorn your Station;) and that you be *diligent Followers of every good Work.*

Then shall you approve yourselves *Widows indeed*, in the Apostles Sense, to the Honor of your Lord, the Reputation of your Religion, the great Satisfaction of your Benefactor, and the mighty Encouragement of such Pious and Charitable Acts; to your own great Comforts whilst you live in this World, and to your eternal Happiness in the World to come.

*Which eternal Happiness God, in his due time, make you, and all of us Partakers of, for the sake of his dear Son Jesus Christ our Saviour: To whom, with the Father and Blessed Spirit be ascribed all Obedience, Adoration and Praise, now and for evermore. Amen.*

*For the Direction and Assistance of the more Ignorant, let me here add,*

'Tis very Adviseable that all Persons, when they intend to partake of our publick Prayers, hasten to the House of Prayer as soon as the Bell begins to call to it, that so they have some little time, before Prayers begin, to raise their Devotions, and fix their Thoughts upon the Duties before them, by considering the Weightiness of them, and the Presence of God; humbly and earnestly Begging his Assistance in the Performance of them; which may be done, by those who are not better provided, in this, or the like short Prayer following.

*Let thy merciful Ears, O Lord, be open to the Prayers of thy humble Servants; And grant that we may now, and at all times, ask*

*faithfully, and obtain effectually through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

Or this.

*Most gracious God, who hast commanded us to pray without ceasing, Incline my Heart to this Duty; and so assist me with thy holy Spirit now and at all times in the Performance of it, that I may so ask that I may receive; and so hear thy Word that I may practice it; and by these Opportunities (for which I bless thy Name) I may daily more and more improve in Righteousness and true Holiness, until I come to thine everlasting Kingdom, through Jesus Christ my Lord and only Saviour, Amen.*

At the Conclusion of Divine Service, and before thou risest from thy Knees, say to thy self this, or the like short Prayer.

*Lord in Mercy hear our Prayers, and relieve all our Wants. Continue unto us these means of Grace, make me, and all that profess thy Name to delight in them, with Reverence and godly Fear to approach unto them, and always to become better by them, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Or this.

*Blessed be thy Name, O God, for this Opportunity of waiting upon thee in thine House; Lord, pardon the Iniquity of my holy Things, and make me a partaker of the Benefit of those Prayers which have been put up unto thee at this time. In Mercy continue unto me these Opportunities, and fit me more and more for thy Service here, and for thy Kingdom hereafter, for Jesus Christ his sake. Amen.*

FINIS